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Joint Indo-Soviet Commission Meets

The first session of the Joint Indo-Soviet Commission on Economic, Scientific, and Technical Cooperation last month failed to live up to its advance billing in spite of public announcements that the meeting heralded a new stage in Soviet-Indian relations. No new credits were announced for India's forthcoming development plan, and there apparently was no agreement on what measures will be taken to coordinate the Indian and Soviet five-year plans--supposedly one of the primary objectives of the Commission when it was formed last year.

The USSR agreed to expand the capacity of the Bokaro steel plant

plant and the Bhilai plant. This assistance, however, will include only items which cannot be produced locally, and it will be financed with unallocated portions of credits previously extended by the USSR.

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New projects to be studied by the Soviets include a alumina plant and a copper mining and concentration facility, both in Madhya Pradesh. The two sides also studied possibilities for increasing Indian production of goods for export to the USSR, including goods from existing Soviet-assisted projects in India. Failure to utilize Soviet-built plants fully has long been a problem of the Soviet aid program in India.

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India has received Soviet economic commitments since 1955 and is now the USSR's largest Third World economic aid recipient. The USSR is also one of India's largest trading partners, accounting for over 10 percent of India's total turnover in 1972.

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5 March 1973

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